

The logo features the letters 'RR' in a large, bold, serif font. A red ampersand is positioned between the two 'R's. Below the letters is a dark, reflective surface with a small, glowing red circle.

REASON & REVELATION

A Monthly Journal of Christian Evidences

FEBRUARY 2024 • VOL. 44 • NO. 2

The "God of the Gaps" Argument: A Refutation

New VBS:
The Name Jesus

**"Christ Did Not
Send Me to
BAPTIZE"**

**Psalm 22:9
and Infant
SALVATION**

The "God of the Gaps" Argument:

A REFUTATION

Kyle Butt, M.Div.

IF you read literature or watch videos that deal with Creation, the existence of God, evolution, the Big Bang, or any number of issues similar to these, you most likely have come across the “God-of-the-gaps” argument and accusation. Why is it called an “argument”? Certain Christian apologists and those who believe in Creation have used the “God-of-the-gaps” idea as evidence that God must exist. The process goes something like this: Scientific evidence is presented that explains certain natural phenomena. That data is limited and there are gaps in our knowledge or understanding of how things work. Since there are gaps that no scientific evidence explains, those who use the “God-of-the-gaps” argument suggest that the concept of God should be inserted to fill all such gaps, and His existence (or the activity and existence of other spiritual entities) provides an adequate and scientific explanation for human gaps in knowledge. Many skeptics explain this “God-of-the-gaps” thinking by pointing to ancient times when people did not understand thunder or lightning so they claimed these disturbances were the activity of sky gods. Or, skeptics compare theists today to ancient people who did not understand the natural causes

of plague and disease and would often attribute such to the work of witches, evil demons, or other spiritual forces.

One can easily see the problem with using a God-of-the-gaps argument to reasonably or logically establish any idea. First, a gap in knowledge never proves anything other than that the person in the discussion does not know something. As those in archaeological circles are fond of saying, “The absence of evidence is not the evidence of absence.” An idea cannot be proven to be true simply because we do not currently know the answer. This is a form of a logical fallacy known as an “argument from ignorance.” Imagine using this kind of reasoning in a criminal case. We do not know who committed the murder of the company CEO, so we conclude it must have been the janitor. What evidence do we have for the janitor? None, but someone had to do it, so we just plug in a janitor-of-the-gaps argument and whisk the poor cleaning professional off to jail. Without adequate evidence, we cannot reasonably assert that we know what is the cause of something just because all our attempts to explain it have failed.

Another obvious problem with the God-of-the-gaps argument is

that all it takes to disprove it is to provide a piece of positive evidence that shows another answer to be correct. Since the ancients did not understand thunder, they claimed it was proof that a sky god was angry. As modern science has advanced, we now have an excellent understanding of the physical causes of thunder and sky god activity is unnecessary to explain it. The field of archaeology provides many excellent examples that illustrate this type of failure of arguments from ignorance. In 2008, a skeptic named René Salm wrote a book that claimed the Bible could not be inspired and Jesus was not a real person, because no archaeological evidence existed that proved that the town of Nazareth was inhabited during the first century.¹ He was using a lack of evidence to prove a positive assertion. The next year, in 2009, archaeologists working in the area of ancient Nazareth uncovered a home that dated back to the first century. This discovery completely refuted Salm’s incorrect thesis. Similarly, the God-of-the-gaps argument is a logical fallacy that should not be used by anyone who is trying to make a reasonable case for the existence of God.

We stated, however, that the God-of-the-gaps is an argument **and** an accusation. It fails miserably as a legitimate argument that can validate any conclusion. Most often, however, when it appears in the writings of skeptics and unbelievers, it is being used as an accusation. The gist of the accusation is that those who believe in God do not have evidence for God’s existence, they just see concepts and phenomena in nature that scientists have not yet explained, and they insert the idea of God as the explanation. For instance, when Michael Shermer, well-known unbeliever and founder of *Skeptic* magazine, was asked, “What are the fallacies that people use to supposedly prove that there

How can Christians answer the accusation that belief in God rests upon the fallacious God-of-the-gaps idea?

is a God,” he responded by saying, “Probably one of the most common ones is God-of-the-gaps argument, ‘You scientists can’t explain x, therefore x must not have a natural explanation, ergo there must be a super natural explanation.’”² In a video titled “Scientist Destroys the God of the Gaps,” atheist Richard Dawkins was asked, “How would you respond when people say, ‘Look, we don’t understand the origin of life on Earth, and therefore God must have done it.’” Dawkins responded by saying, “Even theologians don’t buy that, at least sophisticated theologians. It’s what they call a God-of-the-gaps argument. It’s pushing God into the few remaining gaps in our understanding.... [I]t would be bad logic, bad science, and bad philosophy to say, ‘Oh, I don’t understand it, therefore God did it.’”³ Dawkins is correct, most theologians and Christian apologists do not argue this way. But, as the reader can see from Michael Shermer’s statement and the title of the video of Dawkins, skeptics and unbelievers accuse theists of using the God-of-the-gaps argument as one of their primary approaches to establishing the existence of God. How can Christians answer the accusation that belief in God rests upon the fallacious God-of-the-gaps idea?

Answering the God-of-the-Gaps Accusation

In 2021, Stephen Meyer authored a book titled *The Return of the God Hypothesis*.⁴ Dr. Meyer received his Ph.D. from the University of Cambridge in the philosophy of science.

He is the director of the Center for Science and Culture at the Discovery Institute in Seattle. He titled chapter 20 of his book, “Acts of God or God of the Gaps?” And, while we at Apologetics Press would disagree with his old-Earth conclusions and his acceptance of certain aspects of evolution, his discussion about how to answer the God-of-the-gaps accusation is one of the best I have read. He begins by showing what an actual, incorrect logical fallacy and “argument from ignorance” would look like. He stated, “Arguments from ignorance occur when evidence against one proposition is offered as the *sole grounds* for accepting an alternative. Thus they have the following form:

Premise: Cause A cannot produce or explain evidence E.

Conclusion: Therefore, cause B produced or explains E.”⁵

He notes how easy it is to identify this type of fallacy and how unreasonable it would be to use such thinking to try to prove any conclusion. He states that skeptics often claim that the argument for God’s existence based on intelligent design is guilty of this type of illogical thought. How can the theist who is using the design argument show that it is not a God-of-the-gaps argument from ignorance? Meyer states: “To depict proponents of the theory of intelligent design as committing the GOTG fallacy, critics

must misrepresent the case for it.” He summarizes this misrepresentation by showing that skeptics are claiming that the theistic argument looks like this:

“Premise: Material causes cannot produce or explain specified information.

Conclusion: Therefore, an intelligent cause produced the specified information in life.”

If this were how the design argument actually worked, there would be serious problems with it, and the skeptic would be right to challenge it as false. Meyer points out, however, that this misrepresentation of the design argument leaves out a very important premise. Meyer reconstructs the design argument to include the positive evidence that it implies:

“Premise One: Despite a thorough search, no materialistic causes have been discovered with the power to produce large amounts of specified information necessary to produce the first cell.

Premise Two: Intelligent causes have demonstrated the power to produce large amounts of specified information.

Premise Three: Intelligent design constitutes the best, most causally adequate explanation for the origin of the specified information in the cell.”⁶

Notice that there is no gap in the properly stated form of the design

Reason & Revelation is published monthly by Apologetics Press, Inc. Periodicals postage paid at Montgomery, AL. **Postmaster:** Send address changes to **Reason & Revelation**, 230 Landmark Dr., Montgomery, AL 36117; **ISSN:**[1542-0922] **USPS#** 023415.

Apologetics Press is a non-profit, tax-exempt work dedicated to the defense of New Testament Christianity. Copyright © 2024. All rights reserved.

Editor & Associate Editor:

Eric Lyons, M.Min.

Jeff Miller, M.S., Ph.D.*

(*Biomechanical Engineering, Auburn University)

Annual Subscription Rates:

\$14.00 Domestic & Overseas
(OVERSEAS: ADD SHIPPING)
\$12.00 Domestic Bulk
(5+ TO SAME ADDRESS)

Orders, Inquiries, & Address Changes:

Phone: (334) 272-8558
Web: store.apologeticspress.org
E-mail: mail@apologeticspress.org

Discovery—Scripture & Science for Kids is a sister publication for children. For more information, please contact our offices or visit the Discovery website at: www.DiscoveryMagazine.org

argument. We have been doing scientific research for hundreds of years. We have discovered that intelligence is the only entity capable of producing large amounts of specified information. We see large amounts of specified information in cells. Therefore, we are forced by what we know about intelligence from centuries of scientific research to conclude that the specified information in cells is the product of an intelligent Creator. On the other hand, we also know enough about how matter behaves to conclude that it is impossible to get the specified information from materialistic causes. Origin-of-life experiments have been done for decades that have shown how matter does and does not behave. In every single experiment done to date, we have seen that natural processes not only do not produce life, but they cannot produce life. This is not a gap in our knowledge. The argument for design is based on what we know to be scientifically valid in every instance.

Why, then, are so many skeptics convinced that the design argument is a God-of-the-gaps logical fallacy? The reason for this is a prior commitment to naturalism. If a person begins by assuming that there has to be a naturalistic process that brought about life, then that person is forced to see a gap in our current knowledge, since no naturalistic processes have ever (in any experiment under any circumstances) even come close to producing a living cell. As Meyer explained, the question is often posed, “What chemical process first produced life?” Since no such chemical process has been discovered, we are told this is simply a gap in our current knowledge that will be filled in the future. But, as Meyer notes,

Nevertheless, our present lack of knowledge of any such chemical process entails a “gap” in our

knowledge of the actual process by which life arose *only if* some materialistic chemical evolutionary process *actually did* produce the first life. Yet if life did not evolve via a strictly materialistic process but was, for example, intelligently designed, then our absence of knowledge of a materialistic process does not represent “a gap” in knowledge of an actual process.⁷

Meyer offers a great illustration of the point that a “gap” only exists if a person begins by assuming that all scientific explanations must be materialistic. He writes:

Imagine someone mistakenly enters an art gallery expecting to find croissants for sale. That is, he thinks the gallery is actually a fancy bakery. Observing the absence of pastries and rolls, such a person may think that he has encountered a gap in the services provided by the gallery. He may even think that he has encountered a gap in the staff’s knowledge of what must definitely be present *somewhere* in the gallery. Based on his assumptions, the visitor may stubbornly cling to his perception of a gap, badgering the gallery staff to “bring out the croissants already,” until with exasperation they show him the exit. The moral of the vignette? The gallery visitor’s perception of a gap in service or in knowledge of the location of the croissants derives from a false assumption about the nature of this establishment or about art galleries in general and what they typically offer to visitors.⁸

There is only a gap if a person will not accept what we know scientifically to be true. We “do have extensive experience of intelligent agents producing finely tuned systems such as Swiss watches, fine recipes, integrated circuits, written texts, and computer programs.” Furthermore, “intelligence or mind or what philosophers call ‘agent causation’ now stands as the only known cause

capable of generating large amounts of specified information.”¹⁰ And “it takes a mind to generate specified or functional information, whether in ordinary experience, computer simulations, origin-of-life simulation experiments, the production of new forms of life, or, as we now see, in modeling the design of the universe.”¹¹

CONCLUSION

THE design argument for the existence of God is not an argument from what we do not know or we do not understand about the Universe and life in it, but instead is an argument based on the aspects of nature that we know to be true. As John Lennox stated in his debate with Michael Shermer, “I see God not in the bits of the Universe that I don’t understand, but in the bits that I do.”¹² “For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead...” (Romans 1:20).

ENDNOTES

- ¹ Rene Salm (2008), *The Myth of Nazareth: The Invented Town of Jesus* (Cranford, NJ: American Atheist Press).
- ² Michael Shermer (2022), “Fallacies in Proving God Exists,” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d-Tlsj4i-k>.
- ³ Richard Dawkins, “Scientist Destroys the God of the Gaps,” <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1707548059332046>.
- ⁴ Stephen C. Meyer (2021), *Return of the God Hypothesis: Three Scientific Discoveries that Reveal the Mind Behind the Universe* (New York, NY: HarperOne).
- ⁵ Ibid., p. 414.
- ⁶ Ibid., p. 415.
- ⁷ Ibid., p. 424.
- ⁸ Ibid., p. 424.
- ⁹ Ibid., p. 338.
- ¹⁰ Ibid., p. 187.
- ¹¹ Ibid., p. 385.
- ¹² Debate between Michael Shermer and John Lennox at the Wesley Centre in Sydney Australia, 2009, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y-OPWiXbSDA&t=112s>.



Psalm 22:9 and Infant Salvation

Dave Miller, Ph.D.

SOME within Christendom believe that babies receive salvation while in their infant state. They believe that God saves them by **causing** them to have faith in Him—even from the womb. For example, official Lutheran Church doctrine maintains that God makes infants to trust: “Although we do not claim to understand how this happens or how it is possible, we believe (because of what the Bible says about Baptism) that when an infant is baptized **God creates faith in the heart of that infant.**”¹ They further maintain: “Scripture clearly teaches that infants and children CAN have faith.... In Psalm 22:9 we see that David trusted in the Lord when he was a breast-feeding infant.”² The average Christian cannot help but question such a claim, since it is self-evident that babies obviously lack the characteristics/capabilities and mental maturity that only come with growth and development. Such sentiments are tied to the Calvinistic notion that God directly interferes in a person’s life in order to save some and condemn others—through no fault of their own and absent the exercise of the individual’s own will.³ Since children obviously lack the mental aptitude and intellectual wherewithal to conceptualize God, coming to a knowledge and understanding of

Him, let alone to “believe” in Him, the Calvinist must rely on verses of Scripture that **seem on the surface** to provide support for their claims.

Does Psalm 22:9 teach that God directly intervenes in a child’s heart and mind, miraculously instilling faith in that child’s mind, causing that child to possess self-aware comprehension of what it means to trust in Him? The verse reads in the New King James Version: “But You are He who took Me out of the womb; **You made Me trust** while on My mother’s breasts.” The verse certainly appears—on the surface—to attribute trust being formed in David by God while David was but a nursing infant. However, Scripture often speaks figuratively of God’s involvement in the lives of human beings. In fact, in the same verse, God is depicted as **removing** David from his mother’s womb. Does Scripture intend for the reader to conclude that God momentarily took human form and participated in the delivery of David—perhaps the attending Physician on call? Or is David actually speaking **figuratively**—as indicated by the context—that God’s care had been extended to him throughout life? To state the matter emphatically and unequivocally: Though David said, “You are He who took me out of the womb,” David could not have

meant that God personally, physically, and literally took David out of his mother’s womb.

A MESSIANIC PSALM

HOWEVER, there’s more to consider. Psalm 22 is very clearly a Messianic psalm. Messianic psalms often can have a dualistic application, i.e., they can refer in part to the immediate, contemporary circumstances that the psalmist is facing, while also pointing 1,000 years into the future to indicate what Jesus would endure. They can also include features, some of which apply **exclusively** to Jesus. Consider some of the phrases of Psalm 22:

- Verse 1: “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”—quoted by Jesus on the cross, uniquely referring to His sole circumstances.
- Verses 7-8: “All those who see Me ridicule Me; they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, ‘He trusted in the LORD, let Him rescue Him; let Him deliver Him, since He delights in Him!’”—again, uniquely anticipating the **actual words** spoken by Jesus’ enemies while He was suspended on the cross:

Likewise the chief priests also, mocking with the scribes and elders, said, He saved others; Himself He cannot save. If He is the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him. **He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now if He will have Him;** for He said, “I am the Son of God” (Matthew 27:41-43).

- Verses 14-15: “I am poured out like water, and all My bones are out of joint; My heart is like wax; it has melted within Me. My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and My tongue clings to My jaws; You have brought Me to the dust of

(cont. on p. 8)



VACAT

T H

J



LESSONS FOR ALL AGES

PRESCHOOL-ADULTS

5 LESSONS:

LESSON ONE:

JESUS THE MESSIAH

LESSON TWO:

JESUS THE NAZARENE

LESSON THREE:

JESUS THE LORD

LESSON FOUR:

JESUS THE ALMIGHTY

LESSON FIVE:

JESUS THE SAVIOR



For more information,
Scan the **QR** code or
visit **JESUSVBS.ORG**



ION BIBLE SCHOOL

E N A M E O F

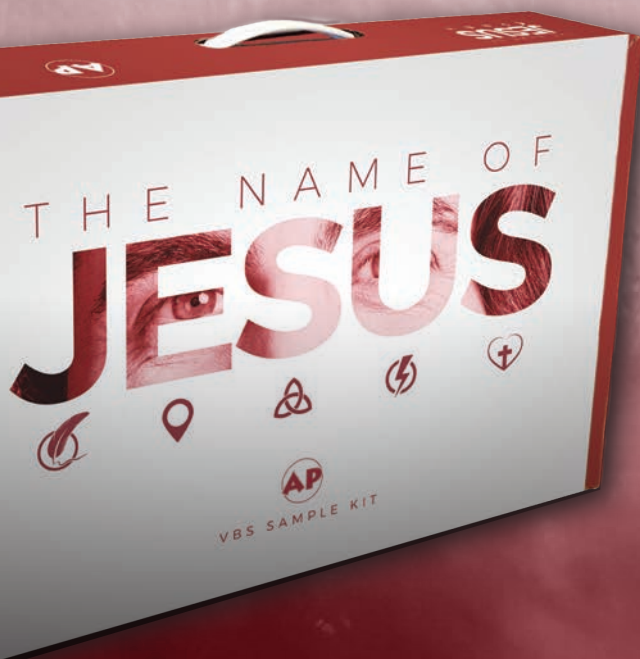
JESUS



SAMPLE KIT
\$59.95

SAMPLE KIT INCLUDES:

- DIRECTOR'S MANUAL
- STUDENT WORKBOOKS
- TEACHERS' MANUALS
- DECORATION POSTER
- TEEN/JUNIOR BOOKLETS
- SKIT MANUAL
- ORDER FORM



death”—a graphic description of Jesus’ agony and depleted condition on the cross, including the stretching of the skeletal framework which caused the bones to separate and extend, the extreme thirst and resulting dehydration (cf. “I thirst”—John 19:28), and eventual death by asphyxiation with its fatal impact on the heart and chest cavity—which may well be described as the heart melting within.⁴

- Verses 16-18: “For dogs have surrounded Me; The congregation of the wicked has enclosed Me. They pierced My hands and My feet; I can count all My bones. They look and stare at Me. They divide My garments among them, and for My clothing they cast lots”—additional detail that characterizes a Roman crucifixion, including the piercing of hands and feet—which David surely never experienced since crucifixion was unfamiliar to the Jews of his day. Crucifixion was a public spectacle to which Jesus was subjected. And, again, all four Gospel writers pinpoint precisely the fact that the Roman soldiers cast lots for His clothing (Matthew 27:35; Mark 15:24; Luke 23:34; John 19:24)—a circumstance that David surely never faced.

Notice that verse 9 of the psalm is “sandwiched” in the midst of these Messianic anticipations. If the verse refers exclusively to Christ, it pertains to the divine mission that Jesus fulfilled by coming to Earth to provide atonement for mankind. This mission required Him to assume human form by being physically born as a baby via a human female. That infant body was specifically “prepared” (Hebrews 10:5) by God for Jesus—not David—to indwell. Consequently, verse 9 would refer to the submissive role that Jesus voluntarily assumed in order to

accomplish the divine scheme of redemption. While in the midst of performing that role, Jesus repeatedly described Himself as being under the direct involvement of the Father, even to the point of stating: “For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me” (John 6:38). Hence, verse 9 may well refer to nothing more than the submission that Jesus reflected when He left the eternal realm and assumed human form—all under the orchestration and guidance of the Godhead.⁵ Accordingly, it makes perfect scriptural sense to speak of God taking Jesus in bodily form out of Mary’s womb in a state of eternal trust/compliance with the divine will to save mankind.

“FAITH/TRUST” OR SECURITY?

HOWEVER, let’s assume that verse 9 refers to David. Was David claiming that God instilled religious “faith” or “trust” within him while in a state of infancy? Apart from whether it is sensible to conclude that an infant is capable of having trust in God—even if instilled miraculously and directly by God—is verse 9 actually stating that God did so? Are there any linguistic indicators that aid the English reader in arriving at an accurate understanding of the verse? Yes, there are.

It is true that several English translations render the verse in such a way that God is represented as making or causing the psalmist to **believe/trust** Him while still in infancy. But, again, such language may be nothing more than a figurative way for David to indicate that God had been with him and cared for him throughout his entire life. However, the underlying Hebrew does not fully support this rendering. The premiere Hebrew lexicographers Koehler, et al., insist that the word means “to

inspire confidence.”⁶ Brown, Driver, and Briggs have “cause to trust, **make secure**.”⁷ Parkhurst gives as the first meaning of the word “to hang close, cling” and gives Psalm 22:9 as a verse where that meaning is intended: “causing me to cling *upon my mother’s breasts*.”⁸ Davidson notes the exact same meaning in the Hiphil stem, citing the same verse: “*to cause to cling to, or hang upon*.”⁹ As a matter of fact, these Hebrew nuances are reflected in a number of English translations. For example, several render the phrase with the word “hope,” like the KJV: “thou didst make me **hope**” (also the AMPC, KJ21, BRG, GNV, WYC). Others have “made me **feel secure**” (NET, HCSB, CSB) while others have “made me **feel safe**” (ERV, CEB, EASY, GW, GNT, ISV, TLB, NOG, NRSV, RSV). Still others express a comparable meaning: “you **protected me** when I was a baby at my mother’s breast” (CEV). “You **took care of me** at my mother’s breasts” (EASY). “You made me trust [**have confidence in**] you” (EXB). “You **cradled me**” (MSG). Each of these renderings correctly capture the meaning being conveyed by the original language. Even the renderings “trust” or “faith” are not referring to **religious** faith—as if the psalmist was suggesting that David “accepted Jesus as his Savior” while in the womb or shortly thereafter. Rather, they are referring to the reliance on God that David realized he had enjoyed his entire life. As a baby learns to feel secure and trust his mother through the comfort of breast feeding, so David would have learned to trust God throughout his life, from beginning to end.

The classic historical treatments of the psalms given by prominent commentators over the years confirm these linguistic considerations. For example, in his popular treatise on the psalms, Princeton Theological Seminary Hebrew and Greek

instructor Joseph Alexander alludes to God's delight in David, "for it was he that brought him life, and through the perils of infancy."¹⁰ Specifically, he insists that the phrase "made me trust" "does not refer to the literal exercise of confidence in God—which could not be asserted of a suckling, but means *gave me cause to trust* or feel secure, in other words, secured me, **kept me safe**."¹¹ In his acclaimed *Exposition of the Psalms*, H.C. Leupold, Professor of Old Testament Theology, translates the phrase, "Thou didst make me to feel safe at my mother's breast" and notes:

In the process of birth it was God who held a protecting hand over him and delivered him. In the tender years of extreme infancy it was He again who gave to the infant's heart that assurance of **safety** that comes when the little one can nestle close to its mother's breast.... Summing it up, it is as though he had said: "During every moment of my life till now thou hast been my God and hast sustained me."¹²

Observe that Leupold is saying that it was David's mother that made him feel safe as an infant—which David then attributed to the providential care of God—not the **direct** intervention of God.

Albert Barnes agreed with these observations on the verse. After noting the marginal alternate reading of "Keptest me in safety," he observes: "the idea is, that from his **earliest years** he had been led to trust in God."¹³ However, lest one get the idea that David was speaking literally of his infancy, he adds concerning the allusion to "my mother's breast": "This does not mean that he literally cherished hope *then*, but that he had done it in the earliest period of his life."¹⁴ Again, the word "trust" refers to the reliance and reassurance that a person can experience due to the non-miraculous care that God extends—a care that He even

extends to the unrighteous (Matthew 5:45).

SUMMARY

THERE'S no doubt that a child can feel a sense of safety derived from a loving mother. But that infantile awareness does not mean that the child comprehends anything more than that the same person that the child can hear and smell is the one who, more than anyone else, holds and cares for the child. Actual trust can only come as the child's mental faculties mature enough to grasp his/her surroundings. We come to trust our parents only as we grow, develop, and become sufficiently self-aware that we can conceptualize our nurturers.

The Bible makes abundantly clear that babies are not capable of sin, nor do they inherit alleged sin from Adam. To suggest such is to place the Bible into a state of hopeless self-contradiction. Human beings must reach an age of accountability in which they are mentally, emotionally, and spiritually capable of grasping the gravity of the situation, realizing that they have reached a point in their development that

they are accountable to God and personally responsible for their own behavior.¹⁵ Until that time, they are deemed by God as "safe" and not culpable for their infantile and childish condition—a condition that Jesus, Himself, spotlighted as a state of innocence (Matthew 18:3). Psalm 22:9 does not teach that babies have the capacity to believe in God or that God miraculously imparts faith into their hearts.¹⁶

ENDNOTES

- ¹ The Lutheran Church Missouri Synod (2023), "FAQs about Doctrine," <https://www.lcms.org/about/beliefs/faqs/doctrine#faith>.
- ² Tom Eckstein (no date), "Why Should We Baptize Infants?" Concordia Lutheran Church, <https://www.con35.cordiajt.org/sermons-resources/concordiajt.cfm>. See also Just and Sinner (2012), "Infant Faith," October 24, 2012, <http://justandsinner.blogspot.com/2012/10/infant-faith.html>.
- ³ For more on Calvinism, see Kyle Butt (2004), "Do Children Inherit the Sin of Their Parents?" <https://apologeticspress.org/do-children-inherit-the-sin-of-their-parents-1378/>; Dave Miller (2017), "Flaws in Calvinism," <https://apologeticspress.org/flaws-in-calvinism-5387/>; Robert Shank (1989), *Elect in the Son* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House).
- ⁴ For the medical aspects of the cruci-

SPEAKING SCHEDULES

Kyle Butt

February 7-8	Henderson, TN	(800) 348-3481
February 11	Adamsville, AL	(205) 674-5659

Eric Lyons

February 7	Henderson, TN	(800) 348-3481
February 9-11	Gainesboro, TN	(931) 858-7460
February 21-22	San Angelo, TX	(325) 651-8363

Dave Miller

February 4	Montgomery, AL	(334) 264-2985
------------	----------------	----------------

Jeff Miller

February 7	Jackson, TN	(731) 664-7811
February 25	Montgomery, AL	(334) 264-2985

fixion of Christ, see William Stroud (1847), *Treatise on the Physical Cause of the Death of Christ and Its Relation to the Principles and Practice of Christianity* (London: Hamilton & Adams), p. 153. See also B. Thompson and B. Harrub (2002), *An Examination of the Medical Evidence for the Physical Death of Christ* (Montgomery AL: Apologetics Press); W.D. Edwards, W.J. Gabel, and F.E. Hosmer (1986), "On the Physical Death of Jesus Christ," *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 255[11]:1455-1463, March 21.

⁵ The translators of the NKJV so understood the verse and thus capitalized both "He" and "Me" to convey to the English reader that Jesus—not David—is under consideration.

⁶ L. Koehler, W. Baumgartner, M.E.J. Richardson, & J.J. Stamm (1994-2000), *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, electronic ed.), p. 120). Also Selig Newman (1834), *A Hebrew and English Lexicon* (London: Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown & Green), p. 58.

⁷ R. Whitaker, F. Brown, S.R. Driver, & C.A. Briggs (2004 reprint), *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew-English Lexicon* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson), p. 105, emp. added.

⁸ John Parkhurst (1799), *An Hebrew and English Lexicon* (London: F. Davis), p. 61, italics in orig.

⁹ Benjamin Davidson (1848), *The Analytical Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1970 reprint), p. 78, italics in orig. See also T.K. Brown (1858), *A Lexicon of the Hebrew Language* (Southwick, England), p. 24.

¹⁰ Joseph Alexander (1975 reprint), *The Psalms Translated and Explained* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker), p. 101.

¹¹ Ibid., italics in orig., emp. added.

¹² H.C. Leupold (1969 reprint), *Exposition of the Psalms* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker), pp. 199-200, emp. added.

¹³ Albert Barnes (2005 reprint), *Notes on the Old Testament: Psalms* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker), p. 197.

¹⁴ Ibid., italics in orig.

¹⁵ See, for example, Dave Miller (2002), "The Age of Accountability," <https://apologeticspress.org/the-age-of-accountability-1202/>.

¹⁶ For additional analysis of Lutheran Church doctrine, see Kyle Butt (2005), *What the Bible says about the Lutheran Church* (Montgomery, AL: Apologetics Press).

"Christ Did NOT Send Me To Baptize"

Dave Miller, Ph.D.

I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, lest anyone should say that I had baptized in my own name. Yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas. Besides, I do not know whether I baptized any other. For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect (1 Corinthians 1:14-17).

THIS passage has often been used to maintain that the role of baptism is not one of essentiality in God's redemptive scheme. It is alleged that if water baptism was necessary and prerequisite to salvation, Paul would not have declared that his divine mission did not include baptizing people. By making this statement, did Paul mean to imply that baptism is **unnecessary** to the remission of sins? Did he mean that baptism is something that God would not **send** a person to do since it is non-essential? A thoughtful analysis of this passage, as well as the rest of the New Testament, provides the answers to these questions.

In the first place, other individuals are explicitly said to have been **sent** by God to baptize—including Jesus Himself. Consider the following verses.

John 4:1-2—"Therefore, when the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that **Jesus made and baptized** more disciples than John (though Jesus Himself did not baptize, but His disciples)...."

Mark 1:4-5—"John came **baptizing** in the wilderness and **preaching a baptism** of repentance for the remission of sins."

Luke 3:3—"And he went into all the region around the Jordan, **preaching a baptism of repentance** for the remission of sins."

John 1:29-33—"The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, 'Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! This is He of whom I said, "After me comes a Man who is preferred before me, for He was before me." I did not know Him; but that He should be revealed to Israel, **therefore I came baptizing with water.**' And John bore witness, saying, 'I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and He remained upon Him. I did not know Him, but **He who sent me to baptize** with water said to me....'"

John 3:22-23—"After these things Jesus and His disciples came into the land of Judea, **and there He remained with them and baptized.** Now John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there. And they came and were baptized."

Examine the relevant phrases from the above passages:

"Jesus made and baptized disciples."

"John came baptizing and preaching a baptism."

"John went preaching a baptism of repentance."

"Therefore I (John) came baptizing with water."

“He who sent me (John) to baptize with water.”

“There Jesus remained with them and baptized.”

Question: Are we to pit Paul against Jesus and John? Did Jesus and John do **wrong** by emphasizing baptism? Do the following three statements mean that the Bible contradicts itself?

“Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John.”

“He who sent me to baptize with water...”

“Christ did not send me to baptize.”

John	?	Paul
Christ sent me to baptize?		Christ did <i>not</i> send me to baptize!

How do we reconcile the fact that John said that Christ sent him to baptize, while Paul said that Christ did **not** send him to baptize? If we are to conclude that baptism is **not** essential on the basis that Paul was **not** sent to do it, by the same “logic” we should conclude that baptism is essential on the basis that John **was** sent to do it.

Look again at 1 Corinthians 1—I thank God that I baptized none of you except **Crispus and Gaius**, lest anyone should say that I had baptized in my own name. Yes, I also baptized **the household of Stephanas**. Besides, I do not know whether I baptized any other. For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect (vss. 14-17).

If Paul was not sent to baptize, why did he baptize Crispus, Gaius, the household of Stephanas, and perhaps others? Did he act out of harmony with Christ’s directive to him? Why did Paul baptize as few Corinthians as possible? Because

baptism is unimportant? No. He states emphatically the reason for not personally baptizing more individuals: “lest anyone should say that I had baptized in my own name” (vs. 15). Why was Paul concerned that no one say that he baptized people in his own name? The answer is just the opposite of what is typically surmised. It was because baptism is an exceedingly important action that is intimately connected to salvation.

TO BE “OF” CHRIST

EXAMINE verses 11-13—
For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe’s household, that there are contentions among you. Now I say this, that each of you says, “I am of Paul,” or “I am of Apollos,” or “I am of Cephas,” or “I am of Christ.” **Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?**

What did Paul mean when he used the expression to be “of” someone? He clearly refers to an authoritative positioning of a person beneath another. To be “of” another in this context means to have been saved by and come under the jurisdiction of that other. This relationship is inherent in the three questions Paul asks the Corinthians—questions that pinpoint **essential prerequisites** to being counted “of” someone:

1. Is Christ divided?
2. Was Paul crucified for you?
3. Were you baptized in the name of Paul?

First, in order to be “of” someone, that someone must accordingly be qualified for others to follow him, devote themselves to him, and place themselves under his rule, Lordship, and control. That person must be “undivided.” To be undivided means that he must have no rivals (e.g., Paul, Apollos, etc.), he must be your sole Savior Who is unique and unsurpassed by all others. His fol-

lowers constitute a single body, of which He is the Head. Hence, the indivisible Christ makes no allowance for other heads or bodies. Your loyalty must be directed to Christ alone. Second, that person must be **crucified** for you. Third, you must be **baptized into his name**.

In view of these realizations, three additional questions are in order: (1) Is Jesus’ **unique, indivisible status** (i.e., His divine identity) essential to salvation? Certainly. (2) Is Jesus’ **crucifixion** essential to salvation? Absolutely. (3) Is **baptism** in His name essential to salvation? If the answer to the first two questions is true, the third **must** be as well. Since the text, by implication, answers all three of these questions in the affirmative, it further follows that a person is not “of Christ” unless and until he is baptized into His name. Baptism is **so** important to salvation, Paul was glad he had baptized so few, **so that he did not contribute to the division afflicting the Corinthian church**. Due to the divisive climate in the church at Corinth, Paul ran the risk of leaving the impression that baptism was disconnected from salvation in Christ. As Willmarth explained: “lest the faith and reverence due to Christ might be ‘divided’—and a part transferred to the distinguished administrator.”¹ Far from minimizing the importance of baptism, or proving that baptism is unessential to salvation, quite the opposite is the case. First Corinthians 1:17 proves the **essentiality** of baptism. Without a divine Lord, His crucifixion, and water baptism, **there could be no Christians**. No one could be “of Christ.”

ENDNOTE

- ¹ J.W. Willmarth (1877), “Baptism and Remission,” *The Baptist Quarterly*, ed. Henry Weston (Philadelphia, PA: American Baptist Publication Society), July, 11:313.



NOTE FROM

The Editor**New VBS Curriculum for 2024: *The Name of Jesus***

Never in the history of the United States have so many people been so confused and misled about Jesus. Some claim He never lived. Many believe He never rose from the dead. And more than 60% of Americans now either claim Jesus was not God or are unsure about His nature.

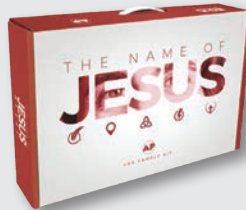
Children in an increasingly disbelieving world want to know (and desperately need to know) why they should believe in Jesus. The billions of non-Christians in the world (including friends, classmates, and neighbors whom we have an opportunity to invite to VBS) have every right to ask, even challenge, Christians as to why we believe in Jesus and why we have an expectation of heaven, a hope anchored in Christ.

Though Peter said to Christians, “be ready to give a defense (or answer) to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you” (1 Peter 3:15), many of us—many Christians—have not always done very well at providing reasons for why Jesus is our hope. Sometimes, Christians give no answers. Occasionally, we provide illogical answers. And sometimes our answers may be so complex that others rightly wonder, “What in the world did they just say?”

Every honest-hearted person should have an opportunity to hear the reasons for being Christians—to learn about the Redeemer of the human race. And Jesus’ Church should be delighted to be used by God and spare no expense or energy to do our part to ensure this sharing of Jesus happens.

In AP’s fourth VBS curriculum, Jeremy Pate (our talented Youth Publications Coordinator) has done a masterful job in developing a VBS all about Jesus that is beautifully simple and yet profound. In *The Name of Jesus*, teachers will have an opportunity to change lives and ground students of all ages with the most fundamental and important truths the world has ever heard. Five names. Five lessons. Jesus (1) the Messiah; (2) the Nazarene; (3) the Lord; (4) the Almighty; and (5) the Savior.

To learn more about *The Name of Jesus* VBS, visit us at Jesusvbs.org. To learn about our other VBS curricula, visit our store at store.apologeticspress.org.

Eric Lyons**See Center Spread for More Details**